

A BILL TO INCREASE THE ANNUAL CAP ON STATES' AUTHORITY TO ISSUE THEIR OWN TAX-EXEMPT PRIVATE ACTIVITY BONDS AND TO INDEX SUCH AMOUNTS IN THE FUTURE

HON. AMO HOUGHTON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. HOUGHTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleague from Massachusetts, Mr. NEAL, together with a number of other colleagues, in introducing our bill, "The State and Local Investment Opportunity Act of 1999." The bill would raise the annual cap on states' authority to issue their own tax-exempt "Private Activity" bonds to \$75 times population (\$225 million if greater) and provides for an inflation adjustment based on the consumer price index for calendar years after 2000. The bill would be effective for calendar years after 1999.

A similar bill was introduced in the 105th Congress and was enacted without the indexation provision and the increase in the annual cap is being phased in starting in 2003. Thus, our new bill is the same as last year's bill except for the indexation and effective date. Chairman ARCHER of the Ways and Means Committee was totally cooperative in our effort last Congress, and indeed was key in including our original proposal in the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1998, which the House passed but the Senate did not take up. Nevertheless, the Chairman persisted in including the phased-in provision in the smaller so-called "extender bill" that was enacted.

We believe this change is important to all of us, in that tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds finance affordable ownership and rental housing, manufacturing job creation, environmental cleanup, infrastructure and student loans. Nationwide, demand for bond authority exceeded supply by nearly 50 percent in 1997, according to the National Council of State Housing Agencies. This is a bipartisan issue. Three-quarters of the House supported our bill in the 105th Congress and a majority of the Senate cosponsored identical Senate legislation. The nation's governors and mayors, other state and local governmental groups, and the public finance community all strongly support full bond cap restoration.

On the possibility that a large tax package moves forward this session, we believe it is important to reconsider the effective date issue, as well as the indexing for inflation going forward.

We urge our colleagues to join us in cosponsoring this important legislation—"The State and Local Investment Opportunity Act of 1999."

IN HONOR OF CASIMIR PULASKI

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the millions of Polish Americans, the city of Chicago, the people of Illinois and citizens of our nation, I rise today in honor of Casimir Pu-

laski, a patriot and military hero and the Father of the American Cavalry.

While countless words have been spoken and many volumes have been written about Casimir Pulaski's life, I believe this contribution to his native home and his bravery on behalf of his adopted land are immeasurable.

Casimir Pulaski was born on March 4, 1747 in Warka, Poland. He was a valiant fighter during Poland's war of independence from Russia. But for his distinguished service toward freedom and independence on behalf of his people and his beloved Poland, he was forced to flee and became an exile.

He remained a voice for just causes and an unwavering spirit for freedom. That is why he joined in America's struggle against the colonists and fought along side General George Washington during the Revolutionary War. He was named brigadier general and the first commander of the American cavalry. For his bravery and service, he was bestowed, and rightly so, the title of "Father of the American Cavalry."

He paid the ultimate price for his convictions and was fatally wounded during the Battle of Savannah.

Casimir Pulaski is an American hero, who fought for freedom, with honor and courage. As we commemorate this legend, I also wish to recognize the countless accomplishments and great contributions of Polish Americans to our nation.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DEATH TAX ELIMINATION ACT

HON. JENNIFER DUNN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, it's been said that only with our government are you given a "certificate at birth, a license at marriage, and a bill at death." Today I am introducing the Death Tax Elimination Act, which seeks to phase-out the onerous death tax. The death tax rates will be reduced by 5 percentage points each year until the highest rate bracket—55 percent—reaches zero in 2010. As these rates are lowered to zero, more and more families will no longer be forced to give the family savings to Uncle Sam and the family business will be saved. In an era when the productivity of American workers is creating huge budget surpluses, it is incomprehensible for this tax to live on. The death tax deserves to die.

One of the most compelling aspects of the American dream is to make life better for your children and loved ones. Yet, the current tax treatment of individuals and families at death is so onerous that when one dies, their children are many times forced to sell and turn over more than half of their inheritance just to pay the taxes. It takes place at an agonizing time for the family; when families should be grieving for a loved one with friends and relatives, rather than spending painful hours with lawyers and bureaucrats.

By confiscating between 37 percent and 55 percent of an estate, the death tax punishes life-long habits of savings, discourages entrepreneurship and capital formation, penalizes families, and has an enormous negative effect on other tax revenues. Americans today are

living longer and enjoying their retirement. At a time when this Congress is discussing the future of Social Security, and how to personalize and modernize the system, we also need to encourage private investment. We should be encouraging people to plan for their future with retirement plans and IRAs, rather than encouraging reckless spending and a me-first attitude. This country was born on the promise of hope and opportunity, and by taxing families and businesses at their most agonizing time, we destroy their hope for the future.

By today's tax system, it is easier and cheaper to sell a business before death rather than try to pass it on after. More than 70 percent of family business and farms do not survive through the second generation. Nine out of ten successors whose family-owned businesses failed within three years of the principal owner's death said trouble paying estate taxes contributed to the company's demise. For family owned business, this is a tax just because the business is changing ownership due to the death of an owner.

Aside from being a source of revenue, another express purpose of the estate tax was to break up large concentrations of wealth. 75 years later, however, reality suggests that rather than being an important means for promoting equal economic opportunity, the estate tax is in fact a barrier to economic advancement for people of all economic circumstances. In effect, the death tax, which was established to redistribute wealth, hurts those it was meant to help—namely, America's working men and women. When small businesses close their doors, loyal employees lose their jobs.

The saying goes that death and taxes are the only certainties in life. I believe it is ridiculous that the government force the American people to deal with both on the same day. Families should be allowed—and encouraged—to save for future generations. I invite my colleagues to join JOHN TANNER and me in our bi-partisan effort to eliminate this detrimental and cruel tax.

TRIBUTE TO THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JUDSON CENTER

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 1999

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the Judson Center on the occasion of their 75th Anniversary.

The Judson Center began as a children's home with a single matron tending to the emotional, physical and spiritual growth of only a few children. As children and families became more fragmented and victimized by poverty, disabilities, abuse and neglect, the Judson Center grew to meet these new challenges.

Under the 17 year leadership of Mounir W. Sharobeem, the Judson Center has 365 employees and is a comprehensive, multi-faceted, community-based human service center providing care for over one thousand individuals on any given day. It serves individuals in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Kalamazoo counties.

In 1991, the agency won Crain's Detroit Business "Best Managed Non-Profit Award," and the Peter F. Drucker Award for Non-Profit